



United States Department of Agriculture

California Farm News

National
Agricultural
Statistics
Service

In Cooperation with the California Department of Food and Agriculture

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SCREENING SURVEY HELPS USDA PREPARE FOR 2007 AGRICULTURE CENSUS

SACRAMENTO, CA, February 28, 2007 – In an effort to make sure that every U.S. farm and ranch is counted in the upcoming 2007 Census of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is currently conducting a screening survey, called the Agricultural Identification Survey.

“Given the importance of the Census to all of U.S. agriculture, we need to make sure that each and every U.S. farm and ranch operation, no matter what size, is on the mailing list to receive a Census form,” said Vic Tolomeo, director of the USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), California Field Office.

NASS mailed an initial survey form to more than one million potential farm operators in January. The agency began a follow-up mailing February 14 to those who did not return the initial form.

“It is important that all recipients return the form, even if they are not involved in farming or ranching,” Tolomeo said. “That way we can update our records and avoid follow-up contacts to non-farmers.”

USDA conducts the Census of Agriculture every five years and will mail out 2007 forms in late December. The Census is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation. The information is used by local communities, businesses, government agencies and others to make critical decisions about the future of farming and rural America.

Vic Tolomeo emphasized that personal information gathered by NASS is kept completely confidential. “Respondents can be assured that we never release names, addresses or any individual information to a third party,” he said.

For more information on the Agricultural Identification Survey or the Census of Agriculture, call (888) 424-7828 or visit www.nass.usda.gov.

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